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ABSTRACT

An ongoing study has been initiated to explore teacher perceptions of principal performance. An instrument, the Principal Profile, had been developed earlier by these researchers to measure principal performance. The existing 134-item instrument, which had been administered only to graduate students, was administered to 258 teachers in one school district and to 192 teachers in a second district. In all, teachers from 23 schools and their principals completed the profile instrument. After exploratory factor analysis, a revised instrument, the Teachers' Perceptions of Principals instrument, was prepared. As additional data are collected, researchers will explore the validity of the instrument and analyze variance to determine the most reliable items. The instrument will be revised again after a minimum of 1,000 administrations are completed. Appendixes contain the original and revised versions of the profile. (SLD)

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL: REFINING THE INSTRUMENT

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Teachers' Perceptions of Principal: Refining the Instrument

Introduction

A major concern of educators, parents, the business world, politicians, and stakeholders at all levels continues to be the academic performance of students in our country's schools. Numerous reform and restructuring measures are in place and undoubtedly others will be introduced in the coming years. The primary focus of these efforts is the improvement of student achievement on various standardized and competency-based tests. Terms such as "accountability" and "school performance score" have become common in the school setting as various state-mandated, "high stakes" testing programs have been implemented. Poor performance on these measures may result in undesirable consequences such as reassignment of staff, reduction in funding, and reconstitution of the school. Invariably, these reform and restructuring measures are imposed by state educational agencies and are implemented in a "top-down" fashion throughout school systems. Consequently, principals and other involved parties view reform initiatives as delegated tasks rather than acts of empowerment.

Are there reasons why the intense efforts to improve student performance are not producing the desired results? Even with the expanded use and availability of technology, improvements in teacher-training programs, an increase in the quantity and quality of staff development, and the implementation of programs designed as remedial measures for schools that do not "measure up," efforts to improve student performance are still disappointing to many.

Williams (2000) indicated that the literature on effective schools frequently cites strong leadership by the school principal as a contributing factor to school effectiveness. According to

Williams, the principal's role is given considerable attention in the literature related to educational administration and in the press. He further pointed out that the increased focus on the school principal resulted from the intense interest of educators and scholars in achieving a greater understanding of the dynamics of school effectiveness. Educational reform movements and substantial research on what causes a school to be effective have stimulated greater public interest in the importance of the principalship.

Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) suggested that the school principal is, in many ways, the most important and influential person in any school. The principal is responsible for all of the building's activities and the principal's leadership sets the tone for the school, the climate for learning, the level of professionalism, the morale of teachers, and the degree of concern about students. Principals serve as the main link between the school and community, and their performance largely determines student and parent attitudes toward the school.

Regardless of the flow of these efforts through the chain of command, the principal of each respective school is held accountable for the performance of that school and is therefore central in the effort to meet or exceed the goals of reform. Prior to the present thrusts to improve student performance, a substantial amount of research had been conducted to define the qualities necessary for effective school leadership. Recently, there has been considerable interest in more accurately defining the qualities necessary for effective leadership in "reform-based" educational environments.

In order to meet the rigorous demands of reform movements, principals must adapt to new roles that require inspiring others and global visionary thinking. They must exhibit characteristics that motivate teachers, students, and parents to higher levels of involvement and ultimately improved student achievement. Effective leadership skills are necessary to meet demands for

greater accountability and for handling potential and existing problems with efficiency, intelligence, and diplomacy.

If we can acknowledge that we need strong leadership by principals in schools if reform efforts are to be effective and academic performance is to increase, what are we doing to make sure our principals are providing effective leadership? It is posited by the researchers that many of the evaluation procedures used by school districts for the purpose of measuring and ultimately improving principal performance are not effective. What can be done to determine the effectiveness of practicing principals? Historically, teachers and administrators have resisted the idea of determining the quality of their performance based on the academic success of students, but some recently adopted accountability models are built around the success of students in individual classrooms and schools. Are there other possibilities for examining and improving the performance of principals?

The researchers suggest that a plausible method for determining the effectiveness of principals would be to conduct assessments based on teacher perception. The results of such assessments could be used to develop professional growth plans for principals and also could identify areas of strength. Such an assessment instrument, previously called the Principal Profile, now identified as the Teacher Perceptions of Principals (TPOP), has been developed and used to measure the perceptions of principals by their respective teachers. Such an approach is not new. Over 20 years ago, Nakornsri (1977) investigated the difference between teachers' perceptions of their principal's administrative performance and relationships between this perception and actual administrative performance. He observed differences in the perceptions and actual performance on certain performance criteria.

In a study by Williams (2000), the Audit of Principal Effectiveness (APE) was used to compare teachers' perceptions of principals in secondary schools. The study compared principals

from schools that were nominated for the National Secondary School Recognition Program to principals from randomly selected schools that were not nominated. This study used a perceptual instrument (APE) that was designed to assess teachers' perceptions of principals' effectiveness. Teacher perceptions were used to identify differences in the performance of principals selected from the two types of schools. The results of this study indicated that principals in the effective schools, those nominated for the Recognition Program, provided better leadership in organizational development and also in several other areas.

Other studies have investigated perceptions relative to various roles. In a study conducted by Keiser and Shen (2000), the researchers investigated principals' and teachers' perceptions of teacher empowerment. In their review of literature they found very limited research that compared teacher and principal perceptions of teacher empowerment. Sullivan (as cited in Keiser & Shen, 2000) indicated that empowerment had been found to be an important factor in maintaining the momentum needed for school restructuring and improvement. This gives credibility to the need for assessing teacher perceptions of their principal's utilization of empowering-type behaviors and making appropriate adjustments based on those assessments, if reform efforts are to be effective.

Overview of the study

Recognizing the key role the principal plays in the success or failure of a school and the abundant research defining the characteristics of effective principals, the researchers sought research relative to the assessment of principals to determine if they were measuring up to expected standards. It appeared that research in this area, using teacher perceptions of principal performance, was very limited and research about instruments designed to measure principal performance was also limited.

The purpose of this research was initially twofold. A district superintendent expressed the desire to administer the instrument (Principal Profile) to all teachers and their principals in the

district's schools and use the resulting data for determining each principal's areas of strength and weakness as perceived by the principal's teachers. A second purpose of this study was the development of the Principal Profile as a valid and reliable measure for assessing the performance of principals on various dimensions of leadership behavior.

The original instrument

An instrument, *Principal Profile* (Appendix A), designed to measure principal performance, had been developed several years earlier. The *Principal Profile* (PP) consisted of 134 items, of which 103 were stated in a positive mode and 31 were related to qualities or actions that were generally considered negative. The positive items were grouped into areas identified as Management, Relationships, Delegation, and Personal Qualities. Each area included items that described characteristics or behaviors considered desirable in effective leaders. Assessment was based on a five-point Likert scale with a score of 5 suggesting that the principal was perceived to be demonstrating the criterion at a level considered "outstanding." Alternative levels of demonstration included 4 as "clearly above average," 3 as "average," 2 as "clearly below average," and 1 as "unacceptable."

Prior to conducting this research, the instrument had been administered only to graduate students in the Educational Leadership Program at the University of Louisiana at Monroe. The instrument was administered during the spring, summer I, summer II, and fall semesters of 2000. Graduate students who completed the instrument were teachers enrolled in evening courses to become certified as school administrators, having previously earned masters degrees, or teachers completing the requirements for a masters degree in Administration and Supervision. The results of that research was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association held at Bowling Green, Kentucky in November 2000.

Administration of the instrument in a school district

In the initial use of the instrument with an entire school district, teachers at each principal's school completed an evaluation and each principal also evaluated their own performance. The teachers' assessments were tallied and an average score for each item was determined. The superintendent was then able to discuss the results with each principal while comparing the self-rating with that given by his/her teachers. Items that had average scores and were "considerably lower" than the principal's perception of performance were identified as potential growth areas and growth plans were developed.

A notable observation resulting from this study was that overall perceptual scores of principals ($M = 3.96$) were higher than overall perceptual scores of teachers ($M = 3.75$). The principals, as a group, had a higher opinion of themselves than did the teachers. Informally, the superintendent indicated that the principals who rated themselves higher than their teachers on the items were generally those who he would have considered weakest. One can only speculate as to why weaker principals might rate themselves higher than those who rated themselves lower yet were perceived as more effective by their teachers.

The superintendent expressed satisfaction with the instrument and appreciated the fact that it was tabulated by an outside agency. The material was comprehensive (probably too much so) and was easy to interpret. Results of that administration and data from the statistical analysis were presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association in Little Rock, Arkansas in November of 2001.

Continuing the development of the instrument

The researchers recognized that the first sample ($N = 258$) was probably too small to make conclusive statements regarding the validity and reliability of the instrument. Additional data collection has continued and the researchers plan to obtain data from a minimum of 4 school

districts and have in excess 1000 evaluations completed by teachers, as suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001).

During the spring of 2002 an additional school district agreed to administer the *Principal Profile* instrument to all of its teachers and administrators. The instrument was administered using the same safeguards as previously. Only principals, no assistants, were included in the study. The instrument was completed by each teacher (N=192) and their anonymity was assured in that no names were affixed. The completed forms were collected by a teacher designated by the superintendent and delivered to the superintendent's office. The instruments from each school were assigned a school number. The principal from each school (N= 9) also completed the same instrument and delivered it to the superintendent's office where each survey form was grouped with the appropriate school. Demographic data were not requested on the instrument and no efforts were made to investigate the difference of responses relative to various demographic variables. The results of the tabulations were presented to the superintendent to be used in developing growth plans for the principals.

The new instrument

After having completed the second administration of the instrument, the task for the researchers was to determine which items exhibited the least variation in response and to select those to be used in a revised instrument. Twenty-three schools and their principals had completed the instrument. Standard deviations were calculated for each item at each school. A matrix chart was created showing all schools and the standard deviation for each item. All items that had a standard deviation of less than 1.16 were marked on the matrix chart. These items were tallied to show how many schools gave each item responses that indicated a standard deviation of less than 1.16. Items that had at least 16 schools giving the item a standard deviation of less than 1.16 were included on the revised instrument. Fifty such items were identified on the positive scale and

seventeen on the negative scale. Those on the negative scale were reduced to 10 by using only those items which were indicated by 18 or more schools. The 50 items (positive scale) identified and the 10 items (negative scale) were retained for the revised instrument.

According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), principal component analysis and factor analysis can be used "to reduce a large number of variables to a smaller number of factors" (p. 585). This analysis was performed to collect data for the purpose of identifying factors that emerged from the 133 items included on the original Principal Profile instrument. Thus, exploratory factor analysis was used to identify those items that clustered to form factors. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was performed using SPSS^x (1998) on the 134 items using the combined samples N=450). The categories into which the items clustered were the essentially the same as those that had previously been derived from the original sampling (n=258). Those categories were labeled as: Management, Relationships, Delegation, Personal Qualities, and Negative. These categories were retained in the revised instrument, now called the *Teachers' Perceptions of Principals* (TPOP). The new instrument is presented in Appendix B.

Discussion

As additional data are collected, the researchers will explore validity, through the use of panels, and continue to analyze variance to determine the most reliable items. The instrument will be revised again after a minimum of 1000 administrations (of the original instrument) are completed using the same procedures as indicated above. Somewhat troubling were the 17 items in the "Negative" category. Some would say these items should be converted into items which were stated in a positive fashion, but because there were greater number of schools that saw these items consistently (smaller standard deviations) it may be that these items would be best retained in the instrument. The researchers are confident that the resulting instrument can be a useful tool in

assisting with the evaluation of principals and helping to identify areas that may need examination and improvement.

Presently the instrument is being offered in several formats. Those who wish to use it may choose the latest revision (60 items), may use the original version (133 items), or may select the individual items to be included on an appraisal instrument designed to meet specific district or school needs.

After establishing the validity and reliability of a new instrument, it is anticipated that the refined instrument will be marketable as a device to conduct valid assessments and, consequently provide impetus and direction for the improved performance of principals. It is important that principals be held accountable and also that teachers have a voice, or a means of offering their perspective, if schools are to continue their improvement.

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Appendix A

PRINCIPAL PROFILE

This instrument is to be used to obtain a comprehensive assessment of teacher and/or principal perception of various aspects of the building principal's/assistant principal's performance and personal qualities which may impact teacher and student performance. It is hoped that the information obtained can be used as direction for professional growth for specific individuals and improvement in preparation programs for school principals. Individual teachers responding will not be identifiable.

The person being assessed is: Principal __ Asst. Prin.___

Please rate using the following scale: 5=outstanding, 4=clearly above average, 3=average, 2=clearly below average, 1=unacceptable

Management

1. **__ Accessible to staff and others**
2. **__ Keeping us informed**
3. **__ Visibility in the school setting**
4. **___Uses a minimum of instructional time for non-instructional tasks thus maximizing time on task**
5. **__ Working effectively with the central (superintendent's) office**
6. **__ Emphasizing staff productivity (on-task behavior by staff)**
7. **__ Taking positions which are most beneficial to the school (on issues)**
8. **__ Communicating clearly the vision or mission of the school**
9. **__ Monitoring classroom performance by teachers**
10. **__ Monitoring student performance and conduct**
11. **__ Managing support staff (non-teachers)**
12. **__ Managing school facilities**
13. **__ Managing school finance**
14. **__ Managing equipment and supplies**
15. **__ Providing needed resources for staff**
16. **__ Providing time for faculty to work collaboratively on curriculum, etc.**
17. **__ Administering discipline effectively**
18. **__ Letting others know what is expected of them**
19. **__ Providing instructional leadership**
20. **__ Supporting excellence in the performance of staff**
21. **__ Providing for beneficial staff-development activities**
22. **__ Demonstrating high expectations for self and others**
23. **__ Providing leadership in curriculum development**
24. **__ Providing a pleasant, safe, and orderly climate for learning**

Relationships

25. **__ Shows consideration for staff (A staff includes teachers and support personnel)**
26. **__ Provides praise and recognition for staff**
27. **__ Senses the temper or tone of faculty members on given issues**

28. ___ Works to create interdependence among staff members
29. ___ Works to improve school climate (relationships)
30. ___ Stands up for teachers
31. ___ Involves parents in productive efforts with the school
32. ___ Rewards positive patterns of behavior
33. ___ Fosters collaboration and group efforts
34. ___ Develops loyalty in staff
35. ___ Supports staff consensus on issues
36. ___ Works to enhance group efforts
37. ___ Asks for faculty input
38. ___ Makes teachers feel like they are working toward common goals
39. ___ Maintains communication which is candid and productive
40. ___ Maintains productive relationships with students
41. ___ Maintains productive relationships with parents
42. ___ Effectively redirects negative patterns of behavior
43. ___ Celebrates/recognizes other's accomplishments
44. ___ Shares decision-making with teachers and other school staff members (when appropriate)
45. ___ Empowers faculty to make decisions not bound by principal's possible censure

Delegation

46. ___ Delegates responsibility to others
47. ___ Trusts teachers to make mature judgements
48. ___ Gives teachers a sense of professional autonomy
49. ___ Creates opportunities for teachers to maximize their potential
50. ___ Stimulates teachers to use their intellect and creativeness
51. ___ Involves faculty in the development of school rules and regulations
52. ___ Enables others to act on their own
53. ___ Uses a committee approach to decision-making (when appropriate)
54. ___ Shares power with faculty
55. ___ Gets things done, but doesn't do everything alone
56. ___ Delegates authority and provides backing for those given the authority
57. ___ Acknowledges the skills and intellect of faculty
58. ___ Causes me to want to volunteer for extra responsibility

Personal Qualities

59. ___ Works with staff in collegial, non-threatening ways
60. ___ Understands people
61. ___ Demonstrates knowledge of school administration
62. ___ Makes decisions and follows through
63. ___ Works well with individuals and groups
64. ___ Demonstrates personal warmth and caring
65. ___ Is inspiring to others
66. ___ Acts as a positive catalyst to get things done
67. ___ Sets a good example for teachers and others
68. ___ Stays well-informed about school issues
69. ___ Is patient

70. ___ Tolerates stress well without taking it out on others
71. ___ Is friendly
72. ___ Uses time effectively
73. ___ Has good organizational skills
74. ___ Exercises good judgement
75. ___ Spends the time it takes to get the job done
76. ___ Uses a democratic approach
77. ___ Is persuasive
78. ___ Takes a risk when it could benefit students or school
79. ___ Is open and candid with others
80. ___ Is flexible (able to Aroll with the punches)
81. ___ Is honest
82. ___ Has good planning skills
83. ___ Is effective
84. ___ Is fair
85. ___ Has good problem solving abilities
86. ___ Is reliable
87. ___ Accepts responsibility for her/his actions
88. ___ Is dependable
89. ___ Provides a good model for teachers
90. ___ Is consistent
91. ___ Has good communication skills
92. ___ Is predictable
93. ___ Is dynamic
94. ___ Is decisive (in a good way)
95. ___ Is resourceful
96. ___ Is charismatic
97. ___ Is intelligent
98. ___ Is energetic
99. ___ Is well-informed
100. ___ Demonstrates perseverance (sticks to it until accomplished)
101. ___ Is respected by staff
102. ___ Has the staff's confidence
103. ___ Relates well to the community

The following are qualities or actions which generally are considered negative. Please provide your perceptions of your principal using a scale of 5-1 with 5=very much so/often; 4=generally so; 3=sometimes/occasionally; 2=rarely; 1=not at all/never.

104. ___ Paternalistic (treats us like children)
105. ___ Lacks knowledge
106. ___ Has poorly defined goals
107. ___ Tells us what to do in a negative fashion
108. ___ Ideas for improvement are always the principals
109. ___ Indecisive
110. ___ Hard-headed/stubborn
111. ___ Authoritarian/dictatorial

112. ___ Blames others
113. ___ We fear retaliation by the principal
114. ___ Intimidates faculty and others
115. ___ Is satisfied with the status quo (is negative about change)
116. ___ Provides poor evaluation of instruction
117. ___ Does not provide help for teachers who need help in their classrooms
118. ___ Supervision efforts are absent or non-productive
119. ___ Communication is limited and formal (not productive)
120. ___ Does not recognize or reward special accomplishments
121. ___ The way to get along with him/her is to conform
122. ___ I and most of the faculty avoid contact with the principal/assistant principal
123. ___ Is aggressive in a negative way
124. ___ Is arrogant
125. ___ Is lazy
126. ___ Lacks expertise
127. ___ Lacks direction
128. ___ Lacks commitment
129. ___ Is ambiguous
130. ___ Is unduly critical
131. ___ Is not accessible
132. ___ Is manipulative
133. ___ Plays favorites
134. ___ Is defensive

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL (TPOP)

This instrument is to be used to obtain a comprehensive assessment of teacher and principal perception of various aspects of the building principal's performance and personal qualities which may impact teacher and student performance. It is hoped that the information obtained can be used as direction for professional growth for specific individuals. Individual teachers responding will not be identifiable.

Please rate using the following scale: 5=outstanding, 4=clearly above average, 3=average, 2=clearly below average, 1=unacceptable

Management

_____ **1. Accessible to staff and others**
_____ **2. Keeping us informed**
_____ **3. Uses a minimum of instructional time for non-instructional tasks thus maximizing "time on task"**
_____ **4. Working effectively with the central (superintendent's) office**
_____ **5. Emphasizing staff productivity (on-task behavior by staff)**
_____ **6. Communicating clearly the vision or mission of the school**
_____ **7. Monitoring classroom performance by teachers**
_____ **8. Managing support staff (non-teachers)**
_____ **9. Managing school facilities**
_____ **10. Managing school finance**
_____ **11. Managing equipment and supplies**
_____ **12. Providing needed resources for staff**
_____ **13. Providing time for faculty to work collaboratively on curriculum, etc.**
_____ **14. Letting others know what is expected of them**
_____ **15. Providing for beneficial staff-development activities**
_____ **16. Demonstrating high expectations for self and others**
_____ **17. Providing leadership in curriculum development**

Relationships

_____ **18. Involves parents in productive efforts with the school**
_____ **19. Fosters collaboration and group efforts**
_____ **20. Works to enhance group efforts**
_____ **21. Maintains productive relationships with students**
_____ **22. Maintains productive relationships with parents**
_____ **23. Effectively redirects negative patterns of behavior**

Delegation

_____ **24. Delegates responsibility to others**
_____ **25. Creates opportunities for teachers to maximize their potential**
_____ **26. Stimulates teachers to use their intellect and creativeness**
_____ **27. Uses a committee approach to decision-making (when appropriate)**

Personal Qualities

_____28. Acts as a positive catalyst to get things done
_____29. Stays well-informed about school issues
_____30. Uses time effectively
_____31. Has good organizational skills
_____32. Exercises good judgement
_____33. Spends the time it takes to get the job done
_____34. Uses a democratic approach
_____35. Is persuasive
_____36. Takes a risk when it could benefit students or school
_____37. Is flexible (able to roll with the punches)
_____38. Is honest
_____39. Has good planning skills
_____40. Has good problem solving abilities
_____41. Provides a good model for teachers
_____42. Has good communication skills
_____43. Is predictable
_____44. Is decisive (in a good way)
_____45. Is charismatic
_____46. Is intelligent
_____47. Is energetic
_____48. Is well-informed
_____49. Demonstrates perseverance (sticks to it until accomplished)
_____50. Relates well to the community

The following are qualities or actions which are generally considered negative. Please provide your perceptions of your principal using a scale of 5-1 with 5=not at all/ never; 4=rarely; 3=sometimes/occasionally; 2=generally so; 1=very much so/ often. ("5" indicates strong positive feelings; "1" indicates you have very negative feelings and the principal does exhibit the characteristic/trait)

Negative

_____51. Lacks knowledge
_____52. Indecisive
_____53. Hard-headed/stubborn
_____54. Blames others
_____55. Provides poor evaluation of instruction
_____56. Is aggressive in a negative way
_____57. Is arrogant
_____58. Is lazy
_____59. Lacks expertise
_____60. Lacks direction

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